

WASHINGTON TIMES
17 December 1986

Durenberger calls scheme 'pure North'

By Jeremiah O'Leary
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

President Reagan yesterday sought limited immunity for Vice Adm. John Poindexter and Lt. Col. Oliver North — a move designed to get "the full story about Iran" from the former National Security Council officials.

In a related development last night, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee said he now believes Col. North planned and pulled off the scheme on his own without the authorization of higher authorities in the White House.

"I'm convinced this is Ollie North's plan," said Sen. David Durenberger, Minnesota Republican. "This is pure Ollie North."

The president's request, directed to the Senate Intelligence Committee where both aides have refused to answer questions, received a cool reception on Capitol Hill.

"It is my desire to have the full story about Iran come out now, the alleged transfer of funds, the Swiss bank accounts, who was involved,

everything," Mr. Reagan said in a statement read by spokesman Larry Speakes on national television.

Mr. Speakes said the president has not ruled out granting executive clemency or a pardon to the two former NSC officials at a future date.

"Certainly executive clemency is available to any president," Mr. Speakes said. But thus far, Mr. Reagan "has not chosen to exercise it."

Mr. Reagan also emphasized in his statement that limited immunity would not involve any "amnesty or clemency."

Republican and Democratic leaders of the Senate intelligence panel, currently investigating the Iran-Contra affair, rejected the president's request.

"Playing games about immunity between the president and the committee is not going to accomplish anything," said Mr. Durenberger.

"Congress is not going to make a decision on immunity and the president is not going to make a decision on a pardon."

The panel's ranking Democrat, Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont, said: "Immunity is premature at this point. We ought to wait" until a court-appointed independent counsel is named to conduct a separate criminal investigation.

Mr. Reagan requested so-called "use immunity" for his two former aides, which would prevent their congressional testimony from being used against them in future criminal proceedings.

Immunity would require a two-thirds vote by the intelligence panel or any other congressional committee, such as the special panels being set up by the House and Senate to continue investigating the affair when the 100th Congress convenes in January.

Immunity would prevent Adm. Poindexter and Col. North from using their Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination, as they did earlier this month before several congressional panels.

Mr. Reagan made the decision to seek immunity for his former aides after consulting with White House counsel Peter Wallison, Chief of Staff Donald Regan, Attorney General Edwin Meese III and Senate Republican leader Robert Dole. Mr. Speakes said.

"There is an urgent need for full disclosure of all facts surrounding the Iranian controversy," the president said. "I want to get this information out. We must get to the business at hand and put this issue behind us."

In requesting use immunity, Mr. Reagan decided not to personally call Adm. Poindexter and Col. North into his office to demand that they tell all.

"I think the president would subject himself to criticism if he followed that course of action," Mr. Speakes said.

Adm. Poindexter resigned as national security adviser and Col.

North was fired as a top NSC aide on Nov. 25, the same day that Mr. Meese announced the two military officers were involved in the diversion of up to \$30 million in Iran arms sale proceeds to Nicaragua's anti-Marxist rebels.

Mr. Reagan described immunity as a legal process that would permit Congress access to the facts in the Iran-Contra affair without preventing "those responsible for any wrongdoing from being brought to justice."

Limited immunity was granted by Congress to former Nixon aides John Dean, H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman during the Watergate hearings in the early 1970s. All three were later prosecuted and sent to jail based on evidence gathered elsewhere by an independent counsel.

Despite the president's plea, lawmakers said any decisions on granting immunity should be postponed until January, when special House and Senate panels are slated to continue the Iran-Contra investigation.

"It's too early" to consider immunity, said Sen. Robert Byrd, a West Virginia Democrat slated to become Senate Majority Leader when the new Congress convenes.

Sen. Sam Nunn, a Georgia Democrat who was named to the special Senate panel yesterday, said the president's proposal would be given careful consideration but that the request could not be met quickly.

Any committee considering immunity would have to retain an attorney experienced in this aspect of the law and would have to advance the investigation to the point where immunity was clearly needed to go further, Mr. Nunn said. In addition, an immunity request would have to be cleared with the independent counsel, who has yet to be named, he said.

Sen. William Cohen, Maine Republican and incoming vice chairman of the intelligence panel, said the president's request for immunity could "defuse" any effort to compel Col. North and Adm. Poindexter to come forward and speak.

Mr. Cohen, who will also be a member of the special Senate Iran-Contra committee, said the president should have addressed the immunity question before firing Col. North and accepting Adm. Poindexter's resignation.

In an effort to make the facts public prior to January, Mr. Speakes said the president may be willing to declassify testimony, normally given in secret, to the Senate Intelligence Committee.

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Yesterday, Mr. Reagan, Secretary of State George Shultz and NSC aide Howard Teicher appeared before the panel.

"I think the president would be willing to declassify all testimony in this matter as soon as he receives a transcript," Mr. Speakes said.

"The president's objective is to get the truth," Mr. Speakes said. "No one in the United States wants the truth more than the president."

In other developments:

- First lady Nancy Reagan said her husband's motivation in requesting immunity was to get Adm. Poindexter and Col. North to talk. "If that's the way to do it, then that's the way to do it. He's very anxious for them to talk," Mrs. Reagan told reporters while visiting Children's Hospital yesterday.

- Archibald Cox, the independent counsel fired by President Richard Nixon at the height of the Watergate scandal, said the intelligence panel should reject the president's call for immunity.

"They are more likely to have justice done and receive the whole truth after deliberate investigation than by hurried revelations under promises of immunity," Mr. Cox said.

- Doctors performed a series of tests yesterday on William Casey to determine what triggered two minor cerebral seizures that forced the 73-year-old CIA director into the hospital.

"He remains in stable condition and continues to undergo diagnostic tests," Georgetown University Hospital spokeswoman Nancy Sanger

said yesterday afternoon. She said the next official report on Mr. Casey's condition was planned for this morning.

- A Toronto businessman reportedly involved in financing secret U.S. arms sales to Iran may launch libel suits against the media for linking him to the deal, his attorney said.

Accountant Donald Fraser's attorney, John Gamble, a former member of Parliament, said Mr. Fraser called him Saturday to "discuss the potential of libel actions."

Mr. Fraser was identified last week as one of two Canadians said to have provided Saudi Arabian financier Adnan Khashoggi with backing for some of the arms sales.

Mr. Gamble said his client, who was not available for comment, would publicly deny knowledge of the arms deal.

Canadian Justice Minister Ramon Hnatyshyn said Mr. Meese confirmed that Mr. Fraser and Walter "Ernie" Miller were the two Canadian businessmen mentioned by CIA Director Casey in closed-door congressional testimony last week as having financed Iranian arms sales.

- In Tokyo, former Justice Minister Akira Hatano said Japan secretly sent an envoy to Iran and Syria in August 1985 in an effort to gain the release of American hostages held in Lebanon by pro-Iranian extremists.

Mr. Hatano disputed a published report that Mr. Reagan had asked Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone in July 1985 to intervene in the hostage issue. "It was our own idea, not a response to a U.S. request," Mr. Hatano said, adding that Mr. Reagan later made a "thank-you call" to Mr. Nakasone.

- In London, Anglican church envoy Terry Waite, who has helped secure the release of hostages in Lebanon, denied any involvement in the sale of arms to Iran alleged to have been made in return for the freedom of American hostages.

• This story is based in part on wire service reports.